

NEWS YOU CAN USE

October 2021

President's Note

Dr. Tara Perrot, DFA President, 2021-2022
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The term is moving along quickly and we only have a few weeks before the fall term study break. We have heard from a few of you as the term has progressed but for the most part, it has been quieter than I expected. This was one reason for us distributing the recent survey, results of which are summarized below, along with a few other items that deserve your attention.

Fall 2021 Check-In Survey Results

From October 7 to October 14, we conducted a survey of our Members to learn about your experience so far with the Fall return to campus. Thank you to the 447 people who participated, representing slightly more than 45% of our Membership.

- Just over 78% were scheduled to teach at least one course, or to hold counselling sessions/library appointments face-to-face. Of those, about 69% have remained face-to-face.
- Going forward, over 52% of respondents indicated not having any concerns with continuing face-to-face. However, 38% have concerns and felt that their Department Chair/Head/Dean would support a shift to on-line teaching while almost 10% have concerns, but said their Department Chair/Head/Dean was not supportive of any other mode of delivery.

A full copy of the quantitative results from the survey can be found [here](#).

Comments provided as part of the survey were read in full. We won't share any here as some Members asked that comments not be released to ensure anonymity. A couple of themes are worth noting:

- There are still Members that are getting push back from Department Chair/Head/Dean with respect to their choice for mode of delivery this term and we would like to hear from you.
- Related to that are comments concerning the winter term and the messaging, or lack thereof, surrounding what modes of delivery will be respected in the winter term. I want to assure members that we will be pushing very soon for details about the winter term and will relay them as quickly as possible.

Indigenizing the Academy

On October 15, I attended a CAUT workshop entitled 'Building Solidarity and Alliances: Indigenizing the Academy'. The speakers provided some tips for establishing an institutional foundation for moving forward with applying calls to action from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's report and for practically addressing issues that get in the way of indigenizing the academy. CAUT produced [this document](#), which includes a checklist of practical ways to begin to build this institutional foundation.

Student Learning Experience Questionnaire - Opt Out Requirement

On Tuesday, October 9, Dalhousie Provost and Vice-President Academic Frank Harvey sent an email to Dalhousie faculty and staff outlining changes to the Student Ratings of Instruction Policy. SRI is now called SLEQ (Student Learning Experience Questionnaire) and the policy is the Student Feedback on Learning Experiences Policy. **If you have not read that email, please do so.** I draw your attention to point #5 in the email, copied here:

“5. Opt Out

Instructors must now opt-out if they do not want the results of the first 7 questions shared with students on a password-protected Brightspace site. Instructors will be contacted directly with instructions on how to opt-out of this process. Previously, instructors opted in to this process.

To qualify for having their scores shared, any individual course SLEQ will need to receive a 40% response rate, a minimum of 10 responses and a “sufficient” reliability assessment score.”

The full revised policy can be found [here](#). Please email dfa@dal.ca with your concerns, as well as SLEQ Administrator at Bruno.Roy@dal.ca, or SLEQ@dal.ca. (So the DFA can be aware of your concerns, we invite you to copy dfa@dal.ca on messages sent to directly to Bruno Roy or SLEQ.)

Pre-emptive Strikes Against Potential Bargaining Issues

As we will have to turn our attention once again to bargaining issues later this fall, we are engaging in some pre-emptive strikes against the Board. These strikes are taking the form of social media posts at present. The first issue is our pension, which most of you know is a favorite bargaining issue put on the table by the Board. The pension plan is in great shape having shown incredibly strong performance over the last year. As of August 31, 2021, the Plan was funded at 113.2% on a going-concern basis (the only standard that applies). The Plan is required to be funded at 107.7%, meaning the Plan is healthy.

The second issue is the fallacy of ‘Dalhousie is poor due to the pandemic’. Although we will have more concrete numbers once we have our accounting consultants go through Dalhousie finances in the coming weeks, the unofficial picture from around the country with respect to university finances suggests one of surplus this past year, as outlined in this [recent article](#) by Alex Usher of Higher Education Strategy Associates.

As always, please don’t hesitate to reach out about the above issues or any others.
Sincerely,

Tara Perrot, DFA President, 2021-2022

For comments and feedback, please contact Catherine.Wall@dal.ca

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